DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 355 HE 013 360

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TITLE Trustee Workshops and Retreats.
INSTITUTION Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.
PUB DATE May 78
NOTE 9 p.: For related documents, see HE 013 359-365, ED 159 944, ED 168 394, ED 184 435.
AVAILABLE FROM Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, One Dupont Circle, Suite 720, Washington, DC 20036 (members $1.25, 10 or more $1.00; nonmembers $2.00, 10 or more $1.50)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role: College Administration; *Governance; *Governing Boards; Higher Education. *Professional Development; *Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; *Trustees; *Workshops

ABSTRACT

Approaches to planning, conducting, and assessing workshops or retreats for college trustees and regents are suggested. It is claimed that the most successful workshops or retreats are those that fit into a comprehensive strategy of board development, and that it is important to decide what needs to be accomplished and to involve the board in setting goals and conducting the workshops or retreats. Among the suggestions are the following: look around for sources of assistance; recognize the value of an outside facilitator, group leader, or observer; consider the services of a consultant or firm; choose a time that avoids preoccupation with routine board business; encourage maximum trustee attendance; develop an adequate budget; involve board members in the program itself and encourage some advance trustee preparation; and provide for a summary record and workshop evaluation. Ways to involve trustees in the program and designing the agenda are addressed. Resources from the Association of Governing Boards and sample agendas are included. (SW)

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AGB Trustee Workshops and Retreats

Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges

Richard T. Ingram

Richard T. Ingram is vice president of AGB. In addition to his six years on the Association staff, Dr. Ingram has been a teacher, lecturer, and consultant in higher education. He has contributed to the *Educational Record*, *Community and Junior College Journal*, and AGB Reports, and has recently collaborated on an AGB project to provide self-study guidelines and criteria for governing boards.

Trustee Workshops and Retreats

In response to an increasing number of requests for help in planning, conducting, and assessing inservice workshops for trustees and regents, we offer this publication. With the new sense of purpose among the more than 2,200 postsecondary education boards and their 35,000 volunteer members has come a greater sense of urgency to improve trustee knowledge and performance.

In an AGB survey conducted in 1974, 46% of 600 chairpersons reported that their board had, within the preceding two-year period, "conducted, with the chief executive officer, . . . a retreat to discuss in depth issues bearing on the future of the institution." We hope that the ideas presented here contribute to more effective trusteeship.

At the heart of any interest in planning a workshop or retreat experience for trustees or regents is the desire to help them improve their contribution—to themselves as a collective and legal entity, and to their institution. The board as an organization is much more than the sum of its individual elements, and this is part of the challenge. Planning and conducting a workshop that is to be more than window-dressing requires much more than patience; it requires ample time, sound judgment, some risk—and a little luck.

What do you want to accomplish?

Decide before you begin. Think *long-term* when it is appropriate. Avoid the temptation to deal with symptoms. What may seem on the

surface to be an issue of immediate concern could be part of a larger and deeper problem. A workshop designed to help board members understand their part in fund-raising is one thing, but quite another approach will be necessary if the board does not really understand the fuller scope of its roles and responsibilities, or if the board seems to be otherwise detached from institutional realities.

The most successful workshops or retreats are those which fit into a comprehensive strategy of board development. It is often desirable to conceive of a particular workshop as one element in a series of experiences over a two-or three-year period.

Objectives should be set forth in concrete fashion. Know where you hope to finish before you begin. Discuss problems openly from the beginning, then work together toward avenues of solution. It is important to (1) help the board to recognize that a need exists; (2) involve it at key stages of program development; and (3) provide maximum trustee leadership and participation in the workshop or retreat program.

Gain trustee involvement

Whether the idea for an approach to board development comes from the president, a staff member, the board chairperson or a trustee, the board should be involved from the beginning. The chairperson might assign responsibility to a standing committee as a planning group, or to an ad hoc committee which might include the chairperson, chief executive, and chairpersons of standing committees.

In any event, secure the interest and help of those two or three particularly active, dedicated, and highly respected board members. No single workshop or series of workshops will accomplish desired ends unless the trustees are behind it, set the goals, and help plan and conduct it. Naturally, competent staff help must be provided, but success will depend on the extent of trustee involvement in all the key planning stages.

How can you move from here to there?

- *Look around for help.* Take advantage of your institution's association memberships, including AGB, for suggested resource persons or materials. Friends and colleagues at other institutions may also lend advice.
- *Recognize the value of an "outside" facilitator, group leader, or observer.* It may be important to invite at least one participant who can lend objectivity, insight, and information to the proceedings. A knowledgeable trustee from another institution can help.
- *Consider the services of a consultant or firm.* If the aim is to tie the workshop to a broader program of board development, a consultant can help the board and the staff assess long-term needs, provide greater objectivity, and assist where areas of special concern require particular expertise. On the other hand, few consultants are experienced in helping boards to improve their knowledge or performance; the additional expense also may be a problem.
- *Choose a time which avoids preoccupation with routine board business.* Tacking a program on to the beginning or end of a regularly scheduled board meeting may be expedient, but it is less than ideal. A serious workshop deserves its own special time.
- *Find ways to encourage maximum trustee attendance.* Try out alternative dates in advance. Ask the board chairperson or other key trustee leaders to extend invitations. Avoid holidays. Mail or telephone reminders.
- *Develop an adequate budget.* A well planned and executed function deserves reasonable funding. For unusual expenses, a local foundation or corporation, a particular trustee, or the trustees themselves might be asked for help. (Items to be considered: speaker honoraria and travel; lodging and meals; resource materials, transcription, duplication, and other clerical services.)
- *Insure board member involvement in the program itself.* In developing a workshop agenda, provide ample

opportunity for trustee participation. Trustees should be encouraged to address the issues by articulating alternatives and working toward solutions. Small group discussions are essential. (Some other suggestions are offered later.)

• *Keep the number of participants as small as possible.* But don't overlook other individuals who may offer significant contributions. These may include key administrative officers with whom the board will feel comfortable and who can help with subsequent follow-up actions. Depending upon what it is that needs to be accomplished, spouses may or may not be distracting.

• *Choose a setting away from the board's usual meeting place.* This may mean added expense, but is usually justified. The ideal site is comfortable, encourages reflection, and provides flexibility for various meeting arrangements (large and small rooms, dining facilities, audio-visual capabilities).

Be certain to attend to logistical details. It is often the "small" matters which make for an effective event.

• *Consider co-chairpersons for leadership.* Two highly respected individuals who can work well together provide needed variety in leadership style and help to maintain momentum, especially if the workshop lasts more than half a day.

• *Encourage some advance trustee preparation.* A brief list of questions on the topics scheduled for discussion could be mailed to board members several weeks before the workshop. Written responses to these questions could be compiled for presentation and discussion at the workshop.

An advance reading assignment, accompanied by the workshop agenda and some questions to guide the reading, can help establish a common ground for discussion of particular issues. (A list of suggested publications appears on page 11; the AGB Trustee Information Clearinghouse also can provide information on a variety of topics related to governance.)

• *Provide for a summary record.* A record of the proceedings is important for subsequent action, whether it is confidential for the board or not. Discussion highlights should be summarized, particularly points of consensus and disagreement. It should be available promptly and reviewed by the board at its next meeting for further reflection, reinforcement, and to help evaluate the event.

• *Develop a post-workshop evaluation.* A few key questions will usually suffice. For example:

- What did you understand to be the main purposes of the workshop?
- In your judgment, to what extent were these purposes met?
- What was the most valuable part of the program?
- What was the least valuable part of the program?
- What did you learn about the board as a working unit, or about yourself, that will cause you to approach your trusteeship differently?

Provide a combination of objective and open-ended items. Take advantage of the opportunity to ask for ideas for possible follow-up discussions and topics for future workshops or retreats. Consider the need for anonymity. The evaluation form can be distributed at adjournment or, preferably, a week or two following the event. Include a return, stamped envelope.

• *Be mindful of open meeting laws.* In New Jersey and other states, "workshops" or "training sessions" for *public* college and university boards apparently must be open to the public. Check with your state attorney general. Having an agenda in final form which demonstrates that no official actions will be taken, together with a board resolution which precludes formal actions at the scheduled event, may help with a favorable decision by appropriate authority.

How can you involve trustees in the program?

In addition to pre-workshop trustee surveys and reading assignments to stimulate discussion, you could look to other means to develop a format that generates participation:

- Committee chairpersons to help interpret the issues and discussions as they relate to committee responsibilities—i.e., organize smaller groups by making use of the board's current structure.
- Other trustees who can be assigned discussion group leadership roles; consider individuals who have not been active board members. Require reporting of major points of consensus and disagreement to the full board before adjournment.
- New trustees for "first impressions" or points of confusion which need attention.
- The board member who may recently have attended a relevant educational meeting and who is ready to share his or her new ideas.
- The board member who serves or who has served on the board of another institution, for contrast and comparison.
- The results of a board self-study (see page 7).
- The most recent institutional plan to assess the extent to which goals have been met.
- A set of questions on key topics for use during the workshop, particularly if a pre-workshop questionnaire is not used.
- Your own ingenuity, together with your planning committee's good judgments.

At the risk of overstating the basic premise: Don't count on speeches for an effective workshop; every participant should be encouraged to read, think, write, and speak to the issues at hand.

Shaping the agenda

The best agendas are usually issue-oriented, and responsibility for their construction is best left to a trustee planning committee. Such factors as the board's size and availability of resources will influence what is desirable and necessary.

Two agenda models are offered here mainly to suggest time format. The first agenda suggests an "overnight" program. The informality of an evening together strengthens old friendships, forms new ones, and results in more effective participation in sessions the following day. (But provide a reasonable work activity for everyone following the dinner session the first evening.) The second agenda illustrates a one-day program.

Both agendas utilize two new AGB resources—the Board-Mentor Service and *Self-Study Guidelines and Criteria for Governing Boards*. The Board-Mentor Service, available only to AGB member institutions, offers the assistance of specially prepared volunteers, chosen for their knowledge and experience with boards of various types of institutions. These individuals conduct a special on-campus program, featuring discussion and utilizing a variety of audio-visual materials, to help boards focus on their organization and performance.

AGB resources

Self-Study Guidelines and Criteria have been developed for different types of institutions. They cover various aspects of the board's performance based upon the collective judgments of its members, and can be modified to meet local circumstances.

AGB offers a number of publications which provide useful background reading for a board workshop or retreat. Some of these are listed below. As mentioned above, the Trustee Information Clearinghouse can help boards identify sources of additional information on specific topics related to governance, such as tenure and promotion, student recruiting and long-range planning. Articles in *AGB Reports* highlight these and other subjects.

The Trustee Information Clearinghouse has begun collecting agendas from trustee workshops and retreats across the country. We hope that successful experiences will be shared with us and with your colleagues at other institutions. Meanwhile, we hope this publication helps you and your board toward a rewarding and profitable venture.

Sample Agendas

I. Two-Day Trustee Workshop
Objectives: (1) To explore the board's role and responsibilities; and (2) to identify possible areas for improvement in its organization and performance.

Presiding: AGB Board-Mentor (trustee from a similar type of institution)

Day One

12:30 pm	Luncheon Session
	Discussion of workshop's objectives
	Self-introductions —A little about your background and why you choose to serve on the board —What do you see as some of the institution's (or board's) key objectives over the next five years? —What expectations do you have for this workshop?
2:30-4:00 pm	Review of trustee responses to *Self-Study Criteria*
4:00 pm	Coffee Break
4:15-5:30 pm	Reconvene for continued discussion of results of the *Self-Study*
6:30 pm	Cocktails
7:00 pm	Dinner (no agenda)
8:00-9:30 pm	Evening Session Discussion of the Board's Role in Institutional Planning (AGB Filmstrip)

Day Two

8:00 am	Breakfast Session Discussion of the Board's Role in Fund-Raising (AGB Filmstrip and advance reading assignment)
9:30-11:00 am	Group Discussions (Trustees assigned at random) Purpose: To consider issues raised in earlier discussions and to identify objectives to strengthen the board's organization or performance. Group I—Leader: Chairperson of the Finance and Budget Committee Group II—Leader: Chairperson of the Education Committee
11:00 am	Coffee Break
11:15 am	Closing Session—What have we learned?
12 noon	Next Steps? Brief Reports by group leaders Closing comments by Board-Mentor *Adjournment by Noon* (Luncheon for those who can remain)

II One-Day Trustee Workshop
Objectives: (1) To explore issues of the board's role in the institution's planning and management of resources; and (2) to consider implications for possible committee reorganization.

Presiding: AGB Board-Mentor (trustee from a similar type of institution)

9:30-11:00 am	Opening Session Self-introductions —A little about your background and why you choose to serve on the board —What do you see as some of the institution's (or board's) key objectives over the next five years? —What expectations do you have for this workshop?

11:00 am	Coffee Break
11:15 am- 12:30 pm	Institutional Planning AGB filmstrip presentation, followed by discussion *(Note: several other titles are available from AGB as part of its Board-Mentor Service)* Presiding: Board-Mentor
12:45 pm	Luncheon Session Remarks: Chief Executive Officer of the institution
2:00- 3:45 pm	Management of Resources AGB filmstrip presentation, followed by discussion Presiding: Board-Mentor
3:45 pm	Coffee Break
4:00- 5:00 pm	Group Discussions Informal consideration of issues and suggestions raised in earlier sessions Group I – Discussion Leader: Chairperson of the Finance and Budget Committee; Resource Person: Chief Executive Officer Group II – Discussion Leader: Chairperson of the Education Committee; Resource Person: Board-Mentor
5:15- 5:45 pm	Closing Session Presentations by leaders of discussion groups highlighting the discussions: What are some apparent needs? Next steps?
	Adjournment by 5:45 pm (Cocktails and dinner for those who can remain)

AGB Publications

The following AGB publications provide a variety of useful information and background reading for trustees and regents. They may be ordered at the price indicated from AGB, One Dupont Circle, Suite 720, Washington, DC 20036 (202/296-8400). Payment must accompany order; prices include third or fourth class postage, unless otherwise indicated.

A complete list of AGB publications is available on request.

AGB Self-Study Guidelines and Criteria

- Community College Governing Boards (1976)
- Private College and University Governing Boards (1976)
- Public College and University Governing Boards (1976)
- Governing Boards of Public Higher Education Systems
- Boards of State Postsecondary Education Planning and Coordinating Agencies

Designed for the special needs of each type of institution, these guidelines and criteria assist boards to assess the effectiveness of their organization and performance. The kits can be photocopied for each board member. (Members: $4.00. Nonmembers: $15.00. 10 or more copies: $3.00 each and $10.00 each, respectively. Prices include first class postage.)

AGB Comission on the Future Essays

The seven essays listed below were produced as part of a two-year study by the AGB Commission on the Future. Each discusses the problems and possibilities encountered by trustees of a particular category of institution. (Members: $1.00 each. Nonmembers: $2.00 each. 10 or more copies of the same article: $0.60 each and $1.25 each, respectively.)

- "The Liberal Arts College Trustee's Next 25 Years," by Atherton Bean *(AGB Reports,* Vol. 17, No. 1, May/June 1975)
- "A Plan for Survival [for Private Universities]," by Hugh Calkins *(AGB Reports,* Vol. 17, No. 4, January/February 1975)
- "The Community College in a New Period of Change," by Joseph P. Cosand *(AGB Reports,* Vol. 17, No. 8, September/October 1975)
- "Requiem or Renaissance for the New State College Trustees," by Homer D. Babbidge, Jr. *(AGB Reports,* Vol. 17, No. 7, July/August 1975)
- "Governing Boards in Major Public Institutions," by R.W. Fleming *(AGB Reports,* Vol. 17, No. 9, November/December 1975)
- "The Occasional Search for the Public Interest," by Harold L. Enarson, and "External Governance in Higher Education: Bane or Boon?" by Logan Wilson *(AGB Reports,* Vol. 17, No. 5, March/April 1975)

The Future of Trusteeship, by John W. Nason (1975)

The final report by the director of studies of the AGB Commission on the Future examines the current academic scene, the major responsibilities of governing boards, and describes the membership, structure, operation and morale of "The Effective Board." (Members: $2.00. Nonmembers: $4.00. 10 or more copies: $1.25 and $2.50 each, respectively.)

The Trustee's Ten Responsibilities, by John W. Nason, AGB Pocket Publication No. 1 (1976)

The first in a new series of brief booklets on special topics of importance to trustees, Pocket Publication No. 1 provides a concise summary of trustee responsibilities, discussed more fully in The Future of Trusteeship. *(Members: $0.75. Nonmembers: $1.50. 10 or more copies: $3.50 and $1.00 each, respectively.)*

Effective Trusteeship: Some Guidelines for New Trustees and Regents, by J.L. Zwingle (1975)

A compact handbook outlining the basics of trusteeship: the board's role, organization and relationships with administration, faculty, students and the public, by the former president of AGB. A valuable bibliography on governance is included. (Members: $1.50. Nonmembers: $3.00. 10 or more copies: $1.00 each and $2.00 each, respectively.)

Among several individuals who found time to review drafts of this publication, three deserve special mention for their contributions: Richard Chait, director of The Institute for Educational Management of Harvard University; John W. Nason, former president of Carleton and Swarthmore Colleges; and Mary Louise Petersen, president of the Iowa Board of Regents. The author is grateful.

First Printing, February 1977
Second Printing, May 1978

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This publication was produced with funds provided by a grant from the Lilly Endowment.

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